

Mission Possible!

At precisely 0900 hours on the morning of Sunday, June 4th 2017, a small team of elite, crack commandos descended upon the suburban community of Buffalo Grove. Their mission? To commandeer a one mile stretch of Buffalo Grove Road between Illinois Route 22 and Aptakisic Road for 75 minutes eradicating all trash and or foreign debris in their pathway.

With the temperatures rising quickly and conditions becoming more hazardous by the minute, this small, but heavily armed (with gloves and plastic bags) squad began their assault on the refuse that had infiltrated the grassy right of way. They began moving in a Southerly direction on the East side of the road. Moving with precision and a sense of purpose, each member kept an eye out for even the smallest piece of unwanted litter. Like a well-oiled machine, they moved in unison not overlooking one square inch of ground.

None of them knew the exact dangers that awaited them as they carried out their duty. There were some veterans on this sortie with Kenneth Such and Forrest Kulwin leading the charge. Specialists Bruce Smith and Tommy T-Bone Sherrick had been in harm's way before and knew the perils of this stretch of road. At any given moment there could be a cyclist or buggy wielding, soccer mom bearing down on them. They would not be dissuaded! This was rookie Daryl Ullberg's first mission. Armed with only a headband and his trusty grabber stick, he single handedly took out several Big Gulp cups all by himself.

As the group neared the intersection of Aptakisic Road and Buffalo Grove Road, their bags were heavy with dirty junk and the mercury was soaring. This was no time to quit though. They had reached the halfway point and there was no way that platoon leader Such was going to let them slow down now. As the group executed their precision 180 degree turn they air dropped a bag with collected refuse at the checkpoint for the Lake County boys to pick up later.

Now came the assault on the Western front. The group reassembled on the Northwest corner and continued their operation. They were determined not to leave a single blade of grass unturned. There would be no ifs ands or "butts" about it (cigarette butts that is). As they proceeded north, the heat was now searing the back of their necks. Sure, it would have been easy to surrender but not one of these soldiers showed any signs of slowing. As they pressed on, out of nowhere Kulwin came across broken glass. It was ugly but they knew if they scooped it up, it would only be a matter of time before it cut a gaping hole in the side of the bright orange collection bag. Since they had no corpsman with them it was decided to leave the shards alone and leave a warning beacon behind.

They were nearing the end of the second mile and this band of weary warriors could not help but feel a sense of relief that their mission would soon be over. As they marched on, several citizens with lumps in their throats stopped to thank these heroes. A jogger sweating profusely saluted as he passed the group and thanked the men for their service. Smith and Such tied the final knots in the orange bags and dropped them at the signpost. Kulwin readied them for a photo. Just then without provocation, there appeared dripping wet, the weary jogger once again. The man insisted Kulwin get in the photo and volunteered to snap the momentous image for posterity. As he did so, he asked each of the troops about their cars. "What year?" he asked each of them. One by one they told of their storied machines. The jogger fought back tears as he handed the iPhone with the digital image back to Kulwin. "Very cool" he said as he turned and again continued on his way. Very cool indeed!

- Forrest Kulwin